
*** * BO TALES * ***

Vol.6 No.3

The Newsletter of the Original Hobo Nickel Society Inc.

December 1997



OHNS President's Message

by Bill "Zemo" Fivaz

The annual OHNS meeting and auction is upon us! As you will read further in this issue, our "hobo jungle" get-together is slated for **Saturday, January 10, 1998** at the always fun F.U.N. convention. The meeting, to be held at 10 AM in Room **231B** in the Orange County Convention Center, will be immediately followed by the 69-lot auction, and as usual, there are some **Super** pieces to go under the hammer. You should have received your catalogue. If you can't be there, be sure to send your bids in as indicated. These interesting guys and gals need to be adopted, and who better to serve as foster parents than you?!

This is the year for elections, so if you'd like to serve your organization in any capacity from President to Publicity Director, please let me know by the end of December. You really do get more out of any club if you volunteer to help in some position. It takes very little time and effort, and volunteers are needed. Please think about it and give me a call (770) 396-6125 (also my FAX number) or drop me a note (P.O. Box 888660, Dunwoody, GA 30356-0660). Thanks.

We've had an excellent response from members from my request for articles for Bo Tales, but we need more. Let's inundate our new Editor ("Bo-ette") with articles, even those you've found in a magazine, newspaper, etc. that you feel might be interesting to the members if you don't want to write one.

If you're going to be at the FUN convention, **be sure to stop by the OHNS table** ...we're going to have something special there, and I think you'll be pleased and surprised!

As I mentioned above, taking an **active** interest in your club is really a win-win situation ...your club benefits from your ideas, expertise and involvement, and **you** get a lot more out of collecting than you can imagine. In this regard, I'd like to hear from any of you who have an idea how to make the club better and stronger (and don't feel that if you suggest something you'll be put in charge of it!). What do you feel we need that we don't have and what would you like to see us do about it? We don't want to get complacent and keep doing the same thing year after year if there's a way we can do it better. Again, please take a minute and let me hear from you. I'll answer each letter personally, and send you a neat 1996 Hobo Nickel token, one over-struck on a Buffalo Nickel by Ron Landis, if you remind me in your "suggestion-letter" to do so.

Until the next issue, see you at FUN, and bring your camera to the meeting ...I **guarantee** you'll find something you won't expect! We **do** have fun!!

On A 1943-S Silver War Nickel?!

by Bill Fivaz



As many of you know, Hobo Nickels show up in the darndest places!

This rather unusual specimen was sent to me by a good friend and dealer Brian Greer. I've seen a very few "original" carvings done on Jefferson Nickels, but this is the first I can recall seeing one on a Silver wartime issue.

As you can see from the photo, it is of the typical hobo nickel artists' subject, a bearded man wearing a domed or derby hat. This one happens to be checked, and the beard has a decided upward curl at the end. Jefferson's entire profile has been altered, the hair is neatly carved in and a coat lapel quite well done. The subject almost seems to have a smile on his face (duh! Where else?!), and there is no ear visible.

I thought members might enjoy seeing a specimen not on a Buffalo nickel for a change ...if anyone has one on a different coin and is willing to write a short article on it, I'll be glad to photograph it for you at no charge and send a copy of it on to Gail with your article. I'll also make sure you receive a copy for yourself.

How 'bout it? How easy can it be?

Say goodbye to "ebenezer" for now....

*About the Cover...*The cover picture is from a collage created by Bill Fivaz from photographs of hobo nickels from his extensive collection.

HOBO NICKEL BOOK PROGRESS REPORT

By Stephen P. Alpert OHNS # LM-10

For the past two years I've been working on my large hobo nickel book project. Very little of the book is about Bert and Bo. I have the first draft written, but I need encouragement to finish up the photography and get the book published.

The book will picture about 300 hobo nickels (enlarged to 3 inches) from my collection, each described in great detail using the numerical quality system I've developed. I have divided

hobo nickel carvings (obverses only) into nine component parts or qualities (such as the hat, hair, ear, profile, etc.) and assigned a varying number of points to each based on relative importance, with a total of 60 points. The point total for each hobo nickel helps determine its quality (Crude to Superior) and value.

I'm sitting on a wealth of information, some of which I'd like to share now:

- ✓ I've learned that in the New York City jewelry trade, jewelers used to practice their engraving skills by carving buffalo nickels.
- ✓ I've identified 3 original hobo nickel artists by name; two are signed on the nickels; and one is a spectacular carving I obtained from the son of the carver (now an old man himself). Plus I have identified about 15 more "nicknamed" artists (like "Peanut Ear" and "No Neck").
- ✓ In writing the book, I've discovered some "secret signature marks" of some prolific carvers, including "Peanut Ear"! I won't reveal right now his secret mark or feature, which appears on nearly all "Peanut Ear" carvings. But see if you can find it: it appears on all six of the "Peanut Ear" nickels pictured on page 51 of Romines 1996 book (it is very noticeable on four of them; less so on the other two). [Hint: it's not anything mentioned by Fivaz when he named "Peanut Ear," that's why it's a secret.] More exciting, I've found this same secret mark on the works of another carver (which I'll nickname in my book) whose carvings are similar in style to "Peanut Ear." I conclude that this represents a teacher and student, analogous to Bert and Bo, with "Peanut Ear" probably the student.

I'd like to hear from OHNS members who have hobo nickel information they would like to contribute to the book, and from those who would be interested in buying a copy of the book (it won't be cheap if I have to publish it myself), or who know a publisher who may be interested.

My address:

**Stephen P. Alpert
P.O. Box 66331
Los Angeles, CA 90066.**

I also have a few dozen old original hobo nickels for trade or sale.

Did You Know.....?



Who Posed for the Obverse of the Nickel??



The Indian or Indians who posed for the head on the obverse of the Buffalo Nickel have been discussed and debated at length. In a letter from

James E. Fraser to the Indian Office he stated that his model was a composite portrait of three different Indians: a Sioux chief named Iron Tail, a Cheyenne chief called Two Moons, and another whose name he had forgotten. In another account, Iron Trail (not Tail) is called a Cheyenne, and the nationality of Two Moons is not specified. Still another opinion suggested that "the obverse is a most artistically executed head of a Comanche Indian, ... The head dress presents no suggestion of the war bonnet of the Sioux, which the Buffalo Bill show has led the public to believe is typical of the garb of all American Indians." Indeed, probably all three Indians used as models by Fraser were performers on the Wild West show or sideshow circuit!

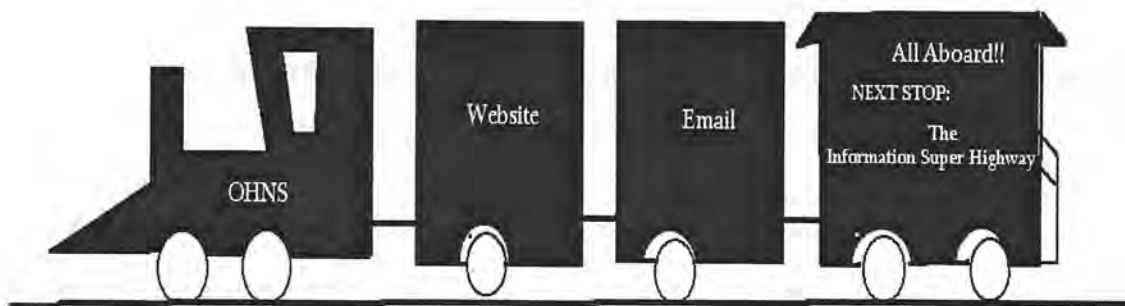
The forgotten Indian, the one Fraser could not remember, appeared in *Numismatic News* in April, 1966 under the headline "**Chief John Big Tree, the Man on the Buffalo Nickel, Highlights 1966 Texas Numismatic Association Convention.**" At that time, he was 104 years old. Chief John Big Tree was a full blooded Iroquois, living on the Onondaga Reservation near Syracuse, New York. According to the chief, he was used as the model for the nose and forehead of the Indian while a Sioux modeled for the cheek and chin and a Cheyenne for the hair and headdress. Chief Big Tree was working in a Coney Island show when he was chosen by Fraser for his classic facial features.

The August 1913 *Numismatist* pictured Cheyenne Chief Iron Trail (or Tail) and he showed a remarkable resemblance to the portrait on the nickel.

What happened to "Black Diamond"?

Black Diamond was a 17 year old bison who lived in the New York Zoological Gardens in 1912. James Earl Fraser used him as the model for the reverse of the Buffalo Nickel. In 1915 Black Diamond was sold for \$700. At that time he weighted 1,550 pounds. His hide was made into a robe, and his head was mounted, but the whereabouts of either are unknown.

Numismatic Art in America by Cornelius Vermeule, Harvard University Press, 1971



By Jake Wood Jr.

"There is a time and a place for all things." I cannot begin to count the times I have heard that proverb. This phrase will be the theme for this article.

Throughout history the place for numismatics has been in the home, in a dining room or study. Numismatic correspondence would take place through newspapers, journals and letters. We are now approaching the 21st century and times are drastically changing, in all aspects of this world. Transportation is no longer dominated by the rail but now by the air. Communication is no longer hand written, but now computer generated and sent via email instead of pony express. People no longer talk to each other by phone, but now through a complex code system on pagers or through a chat room. Our youth no longer are influenced primarily by family and books, but now are influenced by video games, websites and MTV. It is clear that changes are taking place. It is clear that the times are changing, subsequently our methods must also change to accommodate the technology as well as people's interests.

We think often of hobos boarding trains. It's time for those trains to accelerate onto the information superhighway. The train will be taking us to a common place in today's world, a place where young and old are both present. There are two main parts to this plan, the first will be an economic asset to our club. We will be compiling a list of members' E-Mail addresses. The addresses will be used for club mailings, billings, etc. and will be held in the strictest confidence. This will be a quicker method of communication and help alleviate mailing charges.

To send your E-Mail Address

E-Mail: ohns@icdc.com.

In your subject line insert:

DATABASE

In the body of your email include
your name, mailing address &
member number (for verification)

The next part is a website. We will begin working on an OHNS website which will serve dual purposes. The first and most apparent is a member resource section. The other role of this page is a sharing role. Information on OHNS, Hobo Nickels as well as all other parts of the hobby will be available to everyone worldwide at the click of a button. This will be especially important as the ANA launches its numismatic curriculum program. We will be able to help cultivate not only numismatics in general, but more specifically the collection and research of Hobo Nickels.

Contact Jake Wood, Jr.
PO Box 625
Havertown, PA 19083
Phone/Fax: 610.789.9268
E-Mail: jake@icdc.com

Our train is about to leave the station, we have a long, ride ahead, and I look forward to hearing input from everyone. If you find yourself wondering "Why should we do this" just remember "There is a time and a place for everything!"

Tracking The Elusive "Bo"

By Dallas Shaw

You've been hearing about them, reading about them and occasionally seeing a few at coin shows. Your interest piqued, you looked further into the matter, **the bug bit and you decided your numismatic future lay in collecting hobo nickels.** Perhaps, you've been lucky and have already picked up a few nice pieces. But, as the euphoria wears off and the difficulty of the task of locating further acquisitions sinks in, it dawns on you that the road ahead just might be a difficult one.

This is no ordinary fraternity of collectors you've joined. The hobo nickel collector, by necessity, marches to a different drum. The route of march is often a difficult one in terms of finding original material. You have, in fact, joined the ranks of the truly numismatically



challenged. The hobo nickel collector does not enjoy the luxury of mainstream numismatics. You cannot just pick up the latest *Coin World* or *Numismatic News*, review the offerings of a multitude of dealers and place an order for a hobo nickel. If you want an 1877 Indian, a 16-D Merc or a 93-S Morgan, no problem, chances are, you can find one advertised. If not, any number of dealers would be more than happy to find them for you. However, ask for a hobo nickel and most dealers will respond with "Huh?" or "I don't carry them."

Now that I've convinced you that hoboies are hard to find, I'll let you in on a little secret--**they're out there and with a little luck and a lot of perseverance, you can find them.** There are several venues to pursue, some obvious, some not so obvious.

Let's begin with the traditional coin show. First, when you encounter the blank stare or the "I don't carry them," that you'll get from a lot of dealers, give them your name and number and ask them to try and locate

some hoboies for you, and when they find them, to send them to you on approval. You'd be surprised how many dealers will execute due diligence when they know they have a buyer for a given item. Secondly, make sure you visit all of the token and medal dealers on the floor. In fact, make this your first order of business. Make it a point to get to these dealers as soon as the show opens. If you don't, chances are that any original hoboies on hand will be long gone by the time you show up. **The token and medal dealer is the hobo enthusiast's best friend.** They know what you're talking about and they know where to find them. Cultivate a solid friendship with these dealers. Make sure they know how to contact you when they find material because, inevitably, they will.

Another obvious source of hobo nickels is the ads you periodically find in numismatic publications. But, in most cases, this is a definite "buyer beware" situation that needs to be handled with care. The reason being is that the material offered is almost always "neo-boies" or moderns. The number one clue here being the asking price--you really can't find original hobo nickels for ten dollars or so. That's okay for a lot of people. They're looking for nice material and don't really care if it's original or modern. In fact, some hobo numismatists only collect modern material. The rationale being that one can collect a lot more material when dealing at modest prices. However, if originals is your thing, watch the ads closely and always insist on the caveat that the sale is contingent on the piece(s) in question passing authentication as an original before you pay for it. **OHNS has an excellent authentication service** that insures at least two highly qualified authenticators will examine and comment on each piece submitted. You get this and a certificate of authentication, along with a photo, at a very modest price.

Speaking of ads, don't overlook placing an ad of your own in the numismatic publications. Some of these publications feature free ads for subscribers or members. Again, always insist on authentication before any purchase is final.

An excellent source for securing high quality original hobo nickels is the **OHNS auction conducted during the annual meeting at the FUN Convention in Orlando each January.** If you need additional



motivation beyond snow and ice, the allure of nice material should do it. If you simply cannot make it to Florida, no problem. Since each OHNS member receives a free copy of the auction catalog,

you can place mail bids. All of the pieces auctioned are authenticated and some, believe it or not, go for low prices. This is an opportunity that no hobo collector should pass on. **The FUN show is also a good place to find hoboes on the floor.** I see them there every year.

A not so obvious collection venue is to simply get up and talk about hoboes at numismatic and, particularly, non-numismatic organization's membership meetings. Our president, **Bill Fivaz, has an excellent 35mm slide and tape cassette program on hobo nickels that he will be happy to lend you free of charge.** All you have to do, literally, is introduce the topic, turn on the equipment and key the slides (there's even a cue for this included). I have done this many times and on my very first talk, to the local historical society, an old gentleman gave me a nice original hobo nickel that he had received in change at his business some 40+ years ago. He wouldn't take a penny for it. His explanation was, "I've wondered about this coin for many years. Now that I know what it is, I want it to go to someone who will appreciate it." There have been others, but no more free ones. **Believe me, there are a lot of hobo nickels out there--in dresser drawers, jewelry and safe deposit boxes, etc.,** and the people that have them just don't know what they are. Giving a talk on hobo nickels is a wonderful way to educate them.

Make good friends with at least one bank teller. No, you're not going to be picking up cheap hobo nickels that came in as change to the bank, but you just

might, as I did on one occasion, learn of an abandoned safe deposit box containing a number of them. After the requisite number of years have passed and the contents remained unclaimed, banks auction the contents of abandoned boxes. You can bet I'll be around for the auction on this one.

Lastly, don't overlook the local flea markets. Sure, you'll have to sift through a lot of junk, but sometimes, you hit paydirt. **A friend of mine showed me one that he had purchased at a flea market as a "damaged nickel."** After I told him that it was, indeed, an original hobo nickel, he was so impressed that he promptly joined the society.

There are probably some other good sources that I've overlooked. Hopefully, we've discussed enough to get you on the right track in securing nice original hoboes. Work at it and you'll find them. The pleasure of the hunt is exceeded only by the thrill of discovery when you do find them. On the off chance that you don't find any, don't despair. You'll certainly enjoy the chase.

Happy Hunting!

**OHNS Membership Meeting and Auction to
be Held at FUN '98**

On **Saturday, January 10, 1998 at 10:00 AM** in **Room 231 B** of the Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Florida, in conjunction with the Florida United Numismatists Convention, the OHNS will hold its annual Membership Meeting followed by a 69 lot auction. The Membership Meeting is open to all interested parties. The auction is open to OHNS members in good standing (dues must be current!). Lot viewing for the auction will be held during the FUN convention at the OHNS Table.

The Board of Directors of OHNS would like to thank the Board of FUN and especially **Cindy "Mudbug" Grellman** for her hospitality and help in planning this annual event. Each year Cindy goes out of her way to be pleasant, encouraging, efficient and helpful.

THANKS CINDY!

📖📖📖📖 Letters 📖📖📖📖

Each year the OHNS sponsors scholarships for YN's attending ANA Summer Classes. We received the following letters from Seminar YN's.

Robby Mook from Norwich Vermont writes....

Although attendance had jumped, and the cafeteria seemed a little more crowded, the **American Numismatic Association** 1997 summer conference was better then ever! The increased numbers brought an increased enthusiasm and freshness to the conference making an already excellent experience better.

I was glad to be back in Colorado Springs with the rest of the Young Numismatists, who were ready and anxious to get the annual YN auction under way. Under the leadership of **Steve Roach**, the YN's had their most successful auction ever, raising over \$23,000 - a figure far beyond last years! All YNs put in hours of work to make things happen - working some late nights sorting and cataloging. With the additional help of **Gail Kraljevich, James Taylor, Sonny Henry, Bill Fivaz and Brian Fanton**, the auction went smoothly to create a night of fun and fund raising. Although bidders and consignors were especially generous, the nights success is truly due to the dedication and persistence of the YNs, who will hopefully be enjoying the benefits of their excellent work next summer. The money will fund YN Scholarships to the 1998 Summer Conference.

The book sale was excellent, and big! The library staff, already stretched by the constant flow of students dodging in and out of the stacks, put in a great deal of work to

assemble the great selection of books.

A number of awards were also distributed during the conference. **Steve Roach** received the **1997 Young Numismatist of the Year** award, and **Jeremy Hagg** was at the conference and on his way to the New York convention as a result of the **PCGS** award he had recently won. Much to the applause of many YNs, **Gail Kraljevich** received the **Presidential Award** for her devotion to the hobby, especially the YN program.

Classes were as good as ever. My class, **Ancient Roman Coins** helped simplify a difficult and often daunting series with the funny and fascinating instruction of **Kerry Wetterstrom** and **David Vagi**. Other classes were very successful as well.

As always, the YNs hopped onto the bus every night for the now famous YN sightseeing trips. The cog rail trip up to **Pikes Peak** and a scenic visit to the **Garden of the Gods** were especially exciting.

Although it was only my second summer conference, I could really feel the improvements from the year before, and anxiously look forward to next summer! I hope to see many of you there!

Jeremy Haag writes...

Let me open by thanking the **OHNS** for providing me with a scholarship to attend the **ANA's Summer Conference**. I think everyone would agree with the fact that the Summer Conference is a major highlight of the hobby.

Over these past years I have become increasingly involved with numismatics. I chose to take **Robert Hoge's** class on **Coinage of the Ancient World** since ancient coins had recently grabbed my attention. As I soon found out, this is probably one of the most challenging classes offered but it is also one of the most rewarding. Besides learning a great deal about ancient coinage, we learned about the people and events that shaped their evolution. It was a small class that soon became close-knit; sharing stories and knowledge covering all aspects of the hobby and life.

The week wasn't only academics though. All of the YN's

roomed together in the Glass House forming friendships that will not soon die. We participated in numerous social activities in the evenings experiencing the sites and sounds of Colorado Springs. These activities were followed by late nights of trading and socializing, not to mention preparing for the YN Auction. The work definitely paid off though as can be seen by the auction results.

The Summer Conference provides a setting that enables the ordinary collector a chance to talk one on one with some of the big names in the hobby without the rushed atmosphere of a coin show. No one was too good to associate with anyone else. The Summer Conference scored an 'A' in my book and holds a spot on my calendar for next year. I'm anxiously awaiting the opportunity to meet again with all of the friends I made and to take part in all that is offered. Thanks again; I hope to see you there!

The Greatest Week Of My Life

By Sini Jacob

When I first heard about the Colorado Summer Conference through **Mr. Ralph Ross**, the **Clements Coin Club** sponsor, I did not consider going. Although I knew it would be a great way to learn more about coins, I did not know anyone else that wanted to go with me. Mr. Ross is a great guy, but spending every waking moment with him for a week because I couldn't find anyone else to hang out with just did not appeal to me! At the beginning of last summer at the **Texas Numismatic Association**, I met **Erin Davis**, another YN. She informed me that I was missing a great opportunity in not coming to Colorado. I begged Mr. Ross to pull a few strings and about three weeks later, thanks to the **OHNS** and the **ANA**, I was on a plane heading for Colorado Springs.

I have never met such nice people who made coin collecting so interesting. The returning YN's were great from the start. They included everyone in all the activities

no matter what age. They also took time out to help me broaden my own coin interests. I became interested in the Standing Liberty series through conversations with other YN's. My class was a lot of fun. Although I feel I jumped in rather deeply for my first year by taking the **Counterfeiting Detection Class**, I enjoyed the constant banter between the teachers and students, and the help I received from everyone when I did not understand.

The major activity that brought all the YN's together was the YN Auction. Every night was used to work on the auction. Those nights working on this project are some of the fondest memories that I have. I truly got to know the YN's through our crazy conversations and funny stories. The YN Auction was a great success! As I watched everyone pack up to leave on the last night, I knew this had definitely been the **greatest week of my life**.

The Membership Writes

Gentlemen:

Please accept my gratitude for the receipt of your most recent **BO TALES** Newsletter and the enjoyment brought on by the interesting articles. I wish to join your organization. **Gregory "Common Cents" Parma**

Zemo & Company.,

Enclosed is my 2 year membership renewal to **OHNS**. I really like reading **BO TALES**. There are some great stories in the newsletter. I picked up the book by **Gypsy Moon**, too.

I am co-owner of two hobo nickels since the '97 **FUN Show**. We bought them on the bourse floor. One is **Ron Landis** #134 - a GREAT work, and one is a really cool "**Bo**" version of a clown with pushed metal ear.

Hobo - ing is a lot of fun!

Tom Glassbrenner

Dear ...,

Please find enclosed an article I am submitting for publication in the **Canadian Coin News**. In it you will find favorable mention of your club. I hope it brings you a few members!

Thank you for responding to my request for a complimentary copy of your publication. I read through it

and found it very interesting. I have also written to **Ms. Allen** in Rochester to obtain a "neo-bo"!

Chris Boyer, contributor, **Canadian Coin News**

Chris's article is entitled:

Collecting After-Strike Modifications.

In it he writes:

Hobo Nickels - "This category of after-strike modifications had its root in the Depression Years of the United States. Hoboes would take a Buffalo or Indian Head five cent piece and change the Indian's head to show him smoking a pipe, wearing a hat or beard, or some other satirical feature. Sometimes these nickels would be sold for more than their face value, so that he might exchange his primitive engraving for food or other necessities. Many original pieces can fetch high prices, but recent hobo nickels (known as "neo-bos") can be purchased for a few dollars. Some pieces are hollowed out and worked from behind to raise the features, which is known as repousse. For more info....."

Thanks Chris - and thanks to you we have 4 new members from our neighbors North of the Border!

The Membership Writes

In response to the update on known hobo nickel carvers, Ms. J. Allen of Rochester, N.Y. writes...

DEAR BO-ETTE:

Would you please de Fine the word PUNCH METHOD!! I hand tool All my designs. I use my arm and hand pounding with a hammer and a variety of chizels, to produce all of my designs. Some take more than 100 swings of the hammer to produce one hobo nickel.

I just received my BoTales today - it would've been a nice write-up on me, if it had said Hand tooled using Hammer & chizels.

Thanks,
Happy Hobo

Dear "Happy (??) Hobo,"

I'm sorry you were not pleased with the article and the complimentary ad for your nickels. You do bring up an excellent point - definitions of the terms we use to describe the various methods used to carve hobo nickels. They include: carved, punched, machined, knife cut, chiseled, scraped, and various combinations of them all. The authentication committee is presently working on defining these terms and will present our consensus definitions to the membership in a future issue of **Bo Tales**. *We welcome your input!*

Bill Fivaz sent this Hobo Postcard to share:



Dear:

With greetings from Krasnodar (Russia)!

You know I have found the article by Bill Fivaz "Why Not Join a Specialty Club?" (The July Numismatist issue) of great interest and also found the address of the Society. You know I would like to get more information on your Society and also would like to join your club.

Thank you so much for you great help. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

With best wishes,

Nick Gluschenko

e-mail: nickg@ist.kuban.ru

Later Nick writes...

Thank you so much for the recent E-mail message. I enjoyed very much hearing from you.

You know, I would be happy to join the Hobo Nickel Club. Just a little bit about myself. This year I graduated from the Kuban State University to learn such subjects as Economics and Linguistics. My main specialty at the University was the study of foreign languages - three of them: English (first language), German (second) and French (third).

This year I was offered a job to teach the English language at the University and since September I'm employed at the Kuban University. So, now I am teaching at the philological and historical faculties for second and third year students. Currently, I'm having five groups of students averaging 10 to 14 students in each group, and also some two groups are expected to be added to my curriculum from the Economics faculty. Also I'm a post-graduate student in the field of Linguistics and now working on the Ph.D. thesis.

I'm also interested in studying the American Numismatics and especially the Numismatics of the Civil War period. Among other interest in Numismatics are collecting of both Russian, Czarist issues of coins and paper money, as well as some world coinages. A part of my collecting interests includes also the coins of the United States and I use every opportunity to read or know more of this or that American issue of coins and paper money. I enjoy reading the interesting articles by such people as David Ganz, Q. David Bowers, R.W. Julian, and Edward Rochette, to name just a few.

In closing I would like to wish you and your members the best of health, prosperity during this fall season. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Ethnic-Style Hobo Nickels

Gail Baker Kraljevich

Recently I have spent time talking to dealers that were actively buying hobo nickels in the 40's and 50's. At that time, carved coins were called "Jew Nickels," a reflection of the ethnic caricatures that appeared on the coins.

Most of these ethnic-style hobo nickels were carved in the late teens, twenties and thirties by unknown, but very talented, engravers and jewelers on high grade, early



F-248 Photo by Bill Fivaz
Scraggly bearded man wearing a domed hat on a VF 1914-S nickel. The edge is inscribed **EW Los Ang - 1/4/21**. Del Romines states the date may have been when the coin was carved.

Buffalo Nickels. The most common portraits are of a man wearing a derby hat, sometimes with a very ornate hat band. The profile of the Indian may be changed to include a large hooked nose or other highly exaggerated features.

These ethnic-style hobo nickels are actually miniature billboards reflecting the humor, political sentiments, and prejudices of the era before World War II. Many poke fun at particular ethnic groups - mostly Jews; whether this is humor or prejudice depends on whether you are the poker or pokee. A New York token dealer explained to me when a caricature of a Jew is just a caricature and when it can be considered anti-Semitic. When features usually associated with a **stereotypical Jew** are exaggerated or caricatured, it can be anti-Semitic. For example, if one or more features such as: a large, hooked nose; a hat or derby pushed way back on the head; a jeweled stickpin at the neck; a dollar sign in the field; or

Hebrew nonsense words, are featured on a coin, it implies a slur on Jews in general.

In the 1920's and 1930's, anti-Semitism was wide spread in America as well as overseas. Coincidentally, this is when the majority of ethnic-style hobo nickels were carved. The caricatures on these carved nickels are the same as those on post cards and other collectibles of the era. It is only when you make this comparison and read the captions that go with the depictions that you understand the significance.

Not all of the ethnic-style hobo nickels reflect anti-Jewish sentiments. Americans stereotyped many ethnic groups, including the Irish. They were often caricatured



F-264 Photo By Bill Fivaz
Bearded man with monkey-like features wearing a hat on the back of his head carved on an AU 1913 T-1 S nickel.

with monkey-like, flat-faced features. Political correctness was not yet in vogue! I often find it difficult, even today, to know where to draw the line between humor and poor taste.

Ethnic-style hobo nickels, as distasteful as the idea may be to some, need to be accurately identified for proper placement in numismatic history. On the next three pages I have presented nine coins that have been authenticated by OHNS that I feel depict ethnic caricatures.

I welcome other opinions and discussions on the topic and can be reached by email at:

abibaker@erols.com.

O.H.N.S. AUTHENTICATIONS

R-240



Domed hat hobo with mole on neck.

First Authenticator: Delma Romines

Quality: Above Average

Comments:

Nice eye appealing coin with delicate carving on some areas of the hat and neck. A very fine punch was used for all hair to include a heavy eyebrow. Some signs of very light circulation are visible on the cheekbone and some punched hair.

Second Authenticator: Bill Fivaz

Quality: Above Average

Comments:

Very high above average in quality (I could see a grade of Superior!) Nicely highlighted on the hat, hat band, bow and neck. Neat coin!

Artist: unknown

Method: carved & punched

Date of Coin: 1913

Grade: VF

Mint mark: P

F-183



Bearded man with domed hat and Hebrew inscription.

First Authenticator: Bill Fivaz

Quality: Superior

Comments:

This is a superb, totally carved piece by an unknown but very proficient artist. The ethnic subject has carved behind his head "ICHGEBIBLE" and Hebrew word for LIBERTY in front of the man. "Ishkabile" was a radio personality in the 1940's and appeared on Kay Keyser's program. Any connection is unknown.

Second Authenticator: Delma Romines

Quality: Superior

Comments:

Wear on the coin almost drops the quality to Above Average. A probable variation of "Ichkabile" coins, but artwork not quite as elaborate.

Artist: unknown

Method: carved

Date of Coin: 1913

Grade: ?

Mint mark: P

F-184



Bespectled, bearded man wearing a flattened, brimless hat.

First Authenticator: Bill Fivaz

Quality: Average

Comments:

Beard well done and unusual in that the subject has furrows in the brow. Totally carved, possibly by knife. Glasses rather crudely done, but checking in collar, coat and hat. Type of hat resembles those worn in German concentration camps.

Second Authenticator: Delma Romines

Quality: Average

Comments:

Extraneous materials appear to be compatible on obverse and reverse. Slight circulation wear.

Artist: unknown

Method: carved

Date of Coin: no date

Grade: ?

Mint mark: P

O.H.N.S. AUTHENTICATIONS

R-222



Bearded man in domed hat.

First Authenticator: Delma Romines

Quality: Above Average

Comments:

A very eye appealing carving which almost fell into the average category because of only minimal dressing. Approximately one fourth of ear extends above the hat brim with hair, beard, eyeball and eyebrow being raised metal. A very skinny neck and large Adams apple probably denote hunger. The collar and shoulder are fine line carved.

Second Authenticator: Don Farnsworth

Quality: Above Average

Comments:

The beard and the hair are raised (as opposed to being incused). The bullet-like eye is also raised. Ethnic nose, thin neck with Adam's apple. Detailed work on collar and hat brim. Field carved out to give a semi-cameo effect. A lot of work went into this carving.

Artist: unknown **Method:** carved & punched

Date of Coin: no date **Grade:** ? **Mint mark:** none

F-150



Heavily bearded man with derby hat.

First Authenticator: Bill Fivaz

Quality: Above Average

Comments:

I believe this is another of the works of the "Peanut Ear" artist, as it has many of the same characteristics - ear, hair under front of hat, etc..

Second Authenticator: Don Farnsworth

Quality: Above Average

Comments:

Carved on a 1913 T-2 nickel, hair punched, rest of coin carved. Minimal dressing of field. Has nice eye appeal.

Artist: Peanut Ear **Method:** carved & punched

Date of Coin: 1913 **Grade:** AU **Mint mark:** P

R-233



Flat hat hobo with cauliflower ear.

First Authenticator: Delma Romines

Quality: Above Average

Comments:

A very eye appealing carving with bold hair and beard. The nose has been altered to a large and rounded nose, and the ear is a very fat ear. The field, neck, collar, and part of the hat have been dressed and lightly dimpled. A very nice piece of art work.

Second Authenticator: Don Farnsworth

Quality: Above Average

Comments:

Carved on a VF 1917 - D! All the features are sharp. Great eye appeal. With cauliflower ear and large nose, the man looks like a boxer. The field was nicely dressed. A very attractive carving.

Artist: unknown **Method:** carved

Date of Coin: 1917 **Grade:** VF **Mint mark:** D

O.H.N.S. AUTHENTICATIONS

F-278



Bearded amn wearing derby.

First Authenticator: Bill Fivaz

Quality: Above Average

Comments:

This appears to have been carved by our old friend, "Peanut Ear," very possibly an early work of his. Totally carved except for the beard which has been punched.

Second Authenticator: Delma Romines

Quality: Above Average

Comments:

Very similar to "Peanut Ear" carving. Very eye appealing punched and carved coin.

Artist: Peanut Ear ?

Method: carved & punched

Date of Coin: 1913

Grade: AU

Mint mark: P

R-329



Domed hat hobo.

First Authenticator: Delma Romines

Quality: Above Average

Comments:

Nicely carved hat and collar. Nose appears to be an exaggerated broken nose. The ear is relatively small and somewhat distorted. A very large mouth which almost extends back even with the front of the ear. At least 12 teeth are visible. All hair appears to be cut and punched. The dressed area above the hat leaves something to be desired.

Second Authenticator: Bill Fivaz

Quality: Above Average

Comments:

The first example this authenticator can recall seeing with plainly visible teeth.

Artist: unknown

Method: carved & punched

Date of Coin: 1913

Grade: AU

Mint mark: P

F-293



Lightly bearded man wearing derby hat.

First Authenticator: Bill Fivaz

Quality: Average

Comments:

Hair, beard, eye and nostril punched and carved. Hat seated low on subject's head. Heavy outline to hat on top and behind ear. Heavy scratches and green PVC on the reverse.

Second Authenticator: Delma Romines

Quality: Average

Comments:

A low average, but has some eye appeal. Dressing is almost mutilation.

Artist: unknown

Method: carved & punched

Date of Coin: 1913

Grade: low grade

Mint mark: P

MEMBERSHIP

Gail Baker Kraljevich e-mail: abibaker@erols.com

December is already here- can 1998 be far behind? That means it's time to change the batteries in your smoke detectors and time to renew your membership to OHNS! Check your mailing label - the year after your membership number is the year your membership is paid through. If yours says 1997, your dues are now due! Please send a check ASAP to:

**PO Box 1409
Malvern, PA 19355**

Make your check out to: **OHNS. Dues for 1998:** Regular Adult Membership is \$10.00 year, Junior Membership is \$ 5.00 year, and Life Membership is \$250.00.

Donations to the Scholarship Fund are encouraged as are renewals for more than one year. Please don't make me send you a personal letter about dues - *I'm busy enough trying to get this newsletter out on time!*

Bill Anderson Writes...

I hope that every member of OHNS has at least the passing thought of honoring Bill Fivaz's request for an article in our newsletter. I write the newsletter for a membership based non-profit, so I know how he feels. Some days you wonder if anyone is actually reading it, don't you, Bill?

But I know how the members feel, too. We've paid our dues and that's all that's required, right? Well partly. But you've just robbed yourself of some of the joy of being part of this Society.

Since I write in my work and don't even own a single hobo nickel, I thought if I showed you that I can do it, it might inspire a few lines from the rest of us.

I look forward to the stories from Dallas Shaw, beginning with How to locate Hobo Nickels. Perhaps they'll help me find my first one. Why not share the story of some of your finds with the rest of us? Or tell us how you found your first one or got started in this hobby? If I had such a story, you can bet you'd be reading it now instead of this begging for some of your stories.

Including addressing the envelope, this entire exercise took me a whopping fifteen minutes. Do you think you can keep the OHNS alive simply by paying your dues? Donate a few minutes and you'll add more to your membership and your hobby. And you might enjoy it!

Do it right now, like I did. Your stories are bound to be more interesting than another plea for articles, so pick up your pen.

You'll all hear about my first hobo find when it happens, how 'bout yours?

Bill "Hoboless" Anderson

The History of BoTales 1992 - 1997

Gail Baker Kraljevich

The first issue of BoTales was intended as a holiday greeting to the OHNS's original thirteen members! Edited by OHNS founder, Billy "Critter" Ware, Vol. 1 No. 1 reached the Baker's dozen in December of 1992. It was hand produced, no computers or desk top publishing software programs, just old fashioned tape and scissors and a 1950's typewriter. Critter wrote: "Welcome to the first issue of 'Bo-Tales.' Like an original hobo nickel, it was hand produced."

Critter introduced the goals of the Society, including the authentication program and the YN Scholarship program. The opening article, *Hoboes Invade Florida For F.U.N. Show*, announced: ...a Membership Drive, a Grand Gala Event to kick off the official opening of our organization. The Original Hobo Nickel Society will have a table at the annual F.U.N. Convention, the 'Greatest Show on Earth,' staffed by current officers and members to assist in the discovery of true AMERICANA. There will be exhibits of nickels hand carved by George Washington "Bo" Hughes and his mentor "Bert" as well as other hoboes of the period."

Other articles in this first issue included: *Hobo Signs and Symbols*, submitted by Honorary Life Member #2, John "Trapper" Klies, *The Prez Says*, by OHNS President and Charter Life Member #2, Dallas "Colonel" Shaw, a profile of Charter Member, Billy "Critter" Ware, *Bo-Weevils*, by Junior Charter Member, John "Junior" Kraljevich, and *Seven Stages of a Project*, according to "Buddha," aka Chuck Irwin, Charter Life Member # 8.

The format of this issue rekindled a hands on approach to publishing which was refreshing and very well received. The headings were cut from newsprint, the illustrations borrowed from magazines and cards. This "back-to-basics" technique set a friendly, warm tone for the Membership Drive and the Society which still exists today.

It is not known how many copies of the first issue exist as it was reproduced on a copy machine. There are a couple of varieties. The original mailed copies consist of five pages, printed on both sides and stapled at the upper left corner. The last page has Classified

Ads and the heading, CLASSIFIED ADS, reads correctly. In later copies, the heading became folded over in the copying process to reveal Personal Ads from a local Maryland paper.

Volume 2, No. 1 was published in April, 1993 but the date on the newsletter reads in error, April, 1992. Critter's last issue, it was professionally printed and contained pictures from the very successful '93 FUN Convention. The lead article was *A Visit With Newell "Mess Cook" Shireman*, by Gail "Bo-ette" Kraljevich. Newell, Member #52, was a hobo that met and traveled with "Bert" in the 1930's and once owned several nickels that "Bert" carved for him.

The Membership Drive was in full swing and a membership report listed 2 Honorary Life Members, 8 Life Members, 4 Junior Members and 54 Regular Members for a total of 68!

"Critter" writes "This is an editor's dream. I have so much copy from so many other writers, wonderful stories, detailed information, that all I have to do is write an editorial; not like our first issue, I assure you." He then adds: "This is an editor's nightmare. There is so much copy from so many other writers I don't have enough space left to discuss everything we need to talk about."

The issue was professionally formatted and printed on ivory colored, 100% recycled paper. It consisted of two 11" by 17" sheets printed on both sides, and folded to make an eight page 8 1/2" by 11" booklet. Extra copies were printed for distribution to potential members.

Volume 2 No. 2 was a 3 page picture-less issue, mailed in the Fall of 1993. Critter had resigned, and "Bo-ette" had, at the eleventh hour, reluctantly agreed to temporarily edit the club journal. Most of the text was club news from the ANA Summer Seminar and the Convention in Baltimore. There was also a call for membership renewals as the club entered its 2nd year.

Volume 2 No. 3, Winter 1993, was the last issue of the year. The lead article by Chuck "Buddha" Irwin,

Dislocated Elbo Discovered at Lakeland Florida, has my vote for best article to date. In it, Buddha discusses his newly acquired Spanish nickel from the 1870's with the portrait of Alfonso XII dressed like a bull fighter. This article is humorous, "So mine isn't a Bo or Bert. Maybe the art work is a little, ah, simple or, ah, plain... crude, OK!!"; interesting, "BOna fied facts: Alfonso XII was proclaimed King on Christmas Eve"; and well written.

The Winter 1993 issue is 10 pages with pictures and illustrations. It was mailed along with a special supplement to the Hobo Nickel Book by Del Romines. The format is similar to the one used today. This issue was the last (or so I thought!!) with my name as editor. Don "Sport" Farnsworth was introduced as editor - to begin with the April 1994 issue.

Farnsworth continued as editor through the next ten issues, three each year '94 to '96 and one in '97. Memorable articles include: *A Hobo Nickel on a Canadian Quarter*, by Bill Fivaz, April 94; *Modern Fakery Can Be Detected*, by Del Romines, July 94; *Bo-Cabulary*, by Chuck Irwin, July 94; *Tips on Mailing Coins*, by Bill Fivaz, July 94; *Talk About a White Elephant!*, by Bill Fivaz, Oct. 94; *How Can I Tell the Difference...*, by Gail Kraljevich, Oct. 94; *Three Auctions Bring Strong Prices*, by Don Farnsworth, Feb. 95; *And a F.U.N Time Was Had By All...*, by Gail Kraljevich, Feb. 95; *Two Out of a Hundred!*, by Harold Lahm, Feb. 95; *Willie*, by Jeffrey Daniher, July 95; *The Kaiser's Head on U.S. Nickels!*, by Dave Wilson, July 95; *The Known Unknown Artists Series* by Bill Fivaz, July 95, April 96, Aug. 96; *Hobo Nickels -- what else?*, by Ron Landis, Aug. 96; *OHNS Auction at F.U.N.*, by Ray Flanigan, Dec. 96; *A Book Review* by Mary Ann Mellema - *Done and Been*, by Gypsy Moon, Dec. 96; *Hobo Pope?*, by Harold Lahm, Dec. 96; and *The Tramp Chair*, by Bill Fivaz, April 97 plus President's Messages, ads, authentications, letters and OHNS club news.

There have been six fully illustrated hobo nickel auction catalogues sent to members of OHNS. The first ground breaking auction was held in January 95 in conjunction with the OHNS Annual Membership Meeting held at the F.U.N. Convention in Orlando, Florida. There were 30 original hobo nickels open to

mail or floor bids from members only. Many were plate coins from the first Hobo Nickel Book; all were from the extensive collection of Bill Fivaz. Each coin was pictured and described, two to a page, in a 5 1/2 by 8 1/2 inch booklet-format catalogue. A listing of prices realized was in the next Bo Tales.

OHNS Auction No. 2 was held in August of 95 in Anaheim, California during the A.N.A. Annual Convention. OHNS Auction No. 3, January 96 at F.U.N., No. 4, August 96, A.N.A. - Denver, Colorado, and OHNS Auction No. 5, January 97 at F.U.N. At that time, it was decided to have one auction each year, in conjunction with the F.U.N. Convention in Orlando, Florida. Auction No. 6 will continue the tradition in January, 1998.

Back Issues Now Available

There are a limited number of certain back issues of Bo Tales and OHNS Auction Catalogues with prices realized available at \$3.00 each. Please send a check for the total amount (**INCLUDE YOUR DUES!!**) to: OHNS, P.O. Box 1409, Malvern, PA 19355.

BoTales - \$3.00 each

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| <input type="checkbox"/> August 1992 (reprint only) | Vol. 1 No. 1 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> April 1993 | Vol. 2 No. 1 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fall 1993 | Vol. 2 No. 2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Winter 1993 | Vol. 2 No. 3 |
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**** Remember to pay your dues!! ****

CORRECTIONS TO INFORMATION IN HOBO NICKEL BOOKS ONE AND TWO

Del Romines, NLG
P.O. Box 1586 • Tucker, GA • 30085-1586

The following article by Del Romines is in response to an OHNS member's letter asking about certain discrepancies in Del's two books. The first (1982) book states that Del never met George Washington "Bo" Hughes as Del was "hospitalized on one occasion, and Bo never showed upon the second." In the second (1996) book, Del states he met and talked with "Bo" in October of 1981 - 8 months prior to the printing of the first book.

It was recently brought to my attention that there were some OHNS members who were confused with some of the information in the Hobo Nickel books. When I was first approached with this problem, I was positive that the individual who wrote to me was missing one or more pages from the first book. I instantly pulled my copy from the shelf and I could not believe the information was not in the book. I knew it had been written and published.

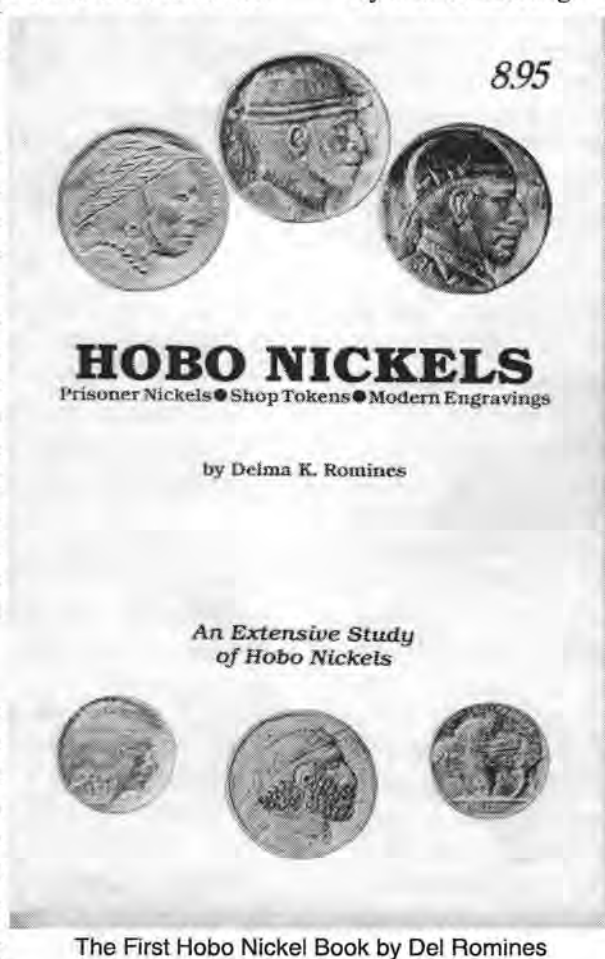
Before I go any further, there is one major point to make and that is - between the first book and the second book, a water line broke in our home in Louisville, Kentucky and water poured into our home for several hours. A tremendous amount of material pertaining to the hoboes and other materials were destroyed by the water. I tried piecing some of the information back together for the second book, and a lot of that piecing was done by memory only. Some memories were not totally correct - especially on dates. Following is information which has since been pieced together from an early *Coin World* article, and from some of the original rough draft of the first book which has been found. This information should be nearly correct.

I originally met Bo in late October 1980, and I was supposed to meet with him again in November 1980. The October meeting information was published in the January 21, 1981 *Coin World*, but it was erroneously written up in CW as November. The October meeting was not a scheduled meeting, but was a "just by chance meeting" after finding out Bo's location from Willard Chisolm. When I met with "Bo" in October, he and I agreed to meet again in November. The meeting was scheduled for one day during the Thanksgiving weekend 1980.

I was totally prepared for this meeting - I had a tape recorder and several tapes, a camera and several rolls of film, and several pads, pencils and pens. About one week before I was to meet with "Bo" for the scheduled interview, I had a severe medication reaction and wound up in the hospital for quite some time. After I got out of the hospital, I tried to locate "Bo" again, with no luck. I did talk with Willard (WC) Chisolm, and he said that he would lay on one more meeting with Bo for me. When I went back to Gnawbone, Indiana, WC said that Bo had already headed south for the winter, but "Bo"

had left me one coin as a token of his friendship, a coin which he had apparently made especially for me, and he had autographed it.

When the first Hobo Nickel book was printed, I had taken the information straight from the CW article and incorporated it into the book. It was in the wrong part of the book, and a notation was made for the printer to remove it from the incorrect location and place it starting on page 68 in the rough draft.



The First Hobo Nickel Book by Del Romines

Apparently somewhere along the line it did not get placed on rough draft page 68.

Since in the back of my mind the material would be put into the proper place in the book, plus the memories of the article already appearing in CW, an oversight in proofing was made during the process of shipping material back and forth to the printer before it was printed. Up until I received the letter about the confusion, I was positive the material was in the book. I turned straight to page 53, and I could not believe it was not there.

Some of the items lost from the water line break were "Tear Sheets" from *Coin World*. Bill Fivaz found his file copy of January 21, 1981 article, and it is exactly what I needed to correct the information in both books.

After going over the information in the books, I can see where people would be confused. Some of the information in Book 2 was from an incorrect memory. Following is what I believe is the correct information:

✓ October 1980 - Page 60, in the first book: Met "Bo" for the time and the information was printed in 1/21/81 *Coin World*. The mention of November 1981 in *Coin World* for meeting with "Bo" was incorrect, as it was actually October 1981.

✓ November 1980 was the last time Willard "WC" Chisolm saw "Bo." (page 52, 1st book)

✓ October 1980 (not 1981) I did meet with "Bo" as described in 1/21/81 CW (page 87, 2nd book)

✓ December 1980 (not 1981) is believed to be the possible month of Bo's death. (page 88, 2nd book)

✓ April 1981 "Bo" could not be found by Willard "WC" Chisolm, and was presumed dead. (page 88, 2nd book)

Apparently some readers misunderstood some of the information. I meet "Bo" (one of the old masters) one

time. This was the "just chance" meeting. Two other meetings were actually laid on for interview, but I was in the hospital for the first one, and "Bo" had already gone south for the second one.

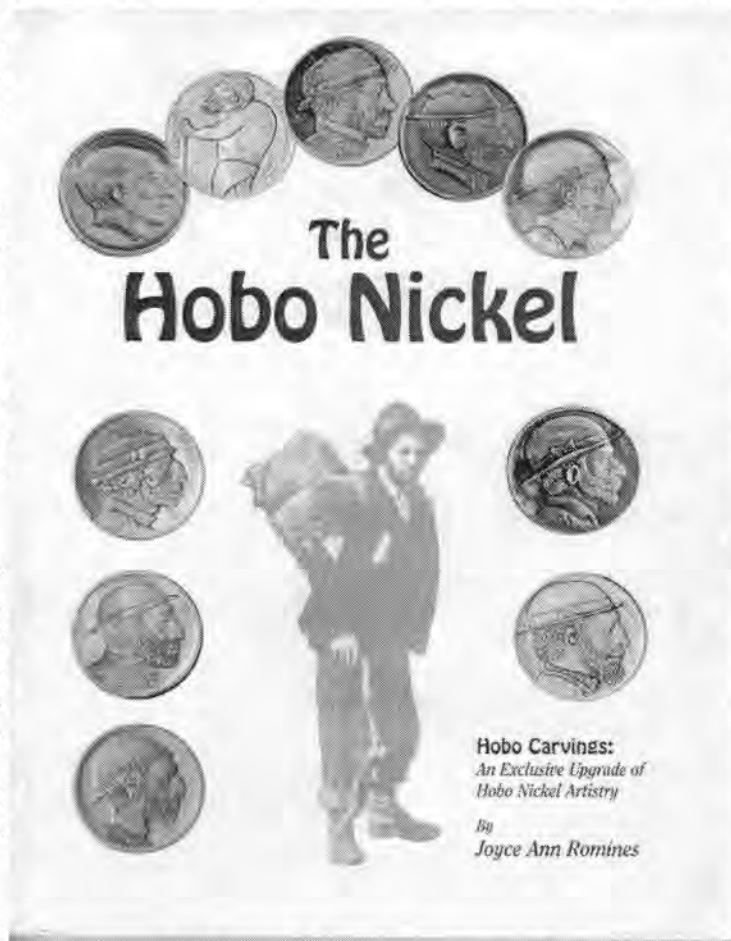
When the material was assembled for book #2, and all of the earlier information was lost, the printing date of June 1982 was used as a basis for trying to mentally reconstruct the lost information. Consequently, most dates in the second book were one year off.

I believe that in book number two there is mention of finding some information which was originally thought to have been lost in the water main break. Since that time a

small amount of the information has been relocated.

If you make a comparison of the information in book number two about the only meeting with "Bo" and the information in 01/21/81 CW, you will see that the information which Bill had on file in his records was some of the information which was believed to have been lost.

THANKS DEL!!



Del Romines Second Hobo Nickel Book

YOU'RE BOARD (But We're Not!)

President	Bill "Zemo" Fivaz
Vice President	Ray "Erie" Flanigan
Membership Secretary & Editor	Gail "Bo-ette" Kraljevich
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Printed by Stanton Printing ☼ PO Box 15487 ☼ Savannah GA 31416-2187
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Dues for 1998 are due now!